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First report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 2233 (2015), the Security Council requested that I report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report covers key developments related to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since the issuance of my report dated 13 July 2015 (S/2015/530).

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Internal developments

2. During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq began implementing widespread reform measures to strengthen its democratic institutions and to address economic and budgetary problems by strengthening State institutions, reducing public expenditures, countering corruption and initiating economic reforms. The political leadership of Iraq continued consultations and steps to promote initiatives on national reconciliation at various levels and also continued to exert efforts to engage some Sunni leaders in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, following the expiration of the presidential term of Masoud Barzani, political parties were locked in intensive negotiations to reach agreement on the President's term and powers, while also continuing the drafting of a constitution for the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

3. Partners participating in the international anti-ISIL coalition continued to support the fight of the Government of Iraq against the terrorist group. During the reporting period, neither side made significant gains. ISIL remains in control of large swathes of territory in the west and north of the country, where it continues to inflict civilian casualties, cause massive displacement and perpetrate systematic human rights violations that may amount to war crimes and/or crimes against humanity.

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B. Political situation

4. In July, when the country was experiencing record high temperatures and repeated electricity cuts, popular demonstrations erupted to protest the poor delivery of services in Baghdad and the southern governorates. By early August, the demonstrations had grown in strength and numbers. The protests have recurred each Friday and are led by civil society groups and young people, who are demanding better services, better governance and an end to government corruption and mismanagement. The protesters' demands for reform gained momentum when, on 7 August, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani urged Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to take decisive action against corruption, improve the Government's performance, reduce public sector expenditure and publicly name officials who are impeding reforms.

5. On 9 August, Prime Minister al-Abadi announced a reform plan to address the economic and social needs of Iraq, counter corruption and strengthen democratic institutions. The plan included downsizing the Government to reduce public expenditure and improve State performance, abolishing the posts of Vice-President and deputy prime ministers as well as a number of senior officials in various ministries, reducing their salaries, protecting services, and judicial reform. The reform plan was unanimously endorsed by the Council of Ministers just hours after the Prime Minister's announcement. On 11 August, the Council of Representatives unanimously approved Prime Minister al-Abadi's first package of reforms and its own reform package to complement the Prime Minister's measures. The Council of Representatives also stated that the reforms should be in conformity with the Constitution of Iraq and other laws.

6. Following the endorsement by the Council of Representatives of the reform packages, Prime Minister al-Abadi began reducing the number of Government personnel. On 16 August, he ordered the immediate abolishment of his deputies' posts, the reduction of the Council of Ministers from 34 to 22 members and the dissolution of the Ministries of Human Rights, Women's Affairs, and Municipalities and Public Works. He also ordered the merging of Ministries with similar specialized functions: Science and Technology with Higher Education and Scientific Research; Environment with Health; Municipalities and Public Works with Housing; and Tourism and Antiquities with Culture. On 20 August, the Prime Minister announced a 90 per cent reduction in the number of personnel dedicated to providing protection for Government officials. On 9 September, he announced the dismissal of 123 senior officials from their posts. They were to either retire or have their administrative status adjusted.

7. The Prime Minister also took steps to formalize the abolition of the posts of the Vice-Presidents. On 20 August, he ceased the payment of their financial entitlements and on 15 September, the Council of Ministers submitted to the Council of Representatives a draft law to abolish their posts. All three Vice-Presidents publicly stated that they considered the abolition of their posts unconstitutional.

8. The Government took steps to initiate inquiries into allegations of political corruption. On 15 August, the Presidency of the Council of Representatives referred to outstanding cases of corruption against staff in the Ministries of Defence and Commerce concerning the award of arms contracts. The day before, the Chairman of the Integrity Commission, Hassan al-Yassiri, had announced that travel bans had been instituted against those under investigation for corruption.

9. As part of national reform efforts aimed at cutting public expenditure, on 9 September, the Prime Minister authorized the reduction of salaries and pensions for the three presidencies, ministers' advisers and managers. To diversify sources of national income amidst declining world oil prices, on 25 August, the Council of Ministers approved the allocation of 5 trillion Iraqi dinars ($4 billion) to revitalize agriculture, industry and the housing sector, encourage investment and create job opportunities. The Council of Ministers also allocated funds to the Ministry of Electricity to equip power stations with adequate fuel in order to alleviate the electricity crisis.

10. Leadership changes were also effected at the governorate level amidst demands by local protesters for efficient service delivery and improved State performance. On 28 August, Governors Ibrahim al-Miyali of Muthanna and Ammar al-Midani of Qadisiya resigned after protesters called for them to step down. On 14 September, the Muthanna Provincial Council elected Falah al-Zayadi (State of Law Coalition) as the new Governor. On 17 September, President Fuad Masum issued a decree endorsing the election of Luay al-Yassiri (State of Law Coalition) as the Governor of Najaf after the former Governor's appeal against his dismissal for financial misappropriation was dismissed by the local administrative court on 24 August. On 5 October, the Ninewa Provincial Council elected Nawfal Hamady Sultan al-A'akoob as the new Governor to replace Atheel al-Nujaifi. The latter's dismissal by Parliament was upheld by the administrative court in Ninewa on 28 August.

11. The Legislature also took steps to strengthen accountability and openness in governance through the initiation of public inquiries into the fall of Ramadi and Mosul and through the enactment of legislation. On 16 August, Prime Minister al-Abadi announced that he would request that military commanders identified by the investigation committee as having abandoned their positions in Ramadi be court-martialled. On 17 August, the Council of Representatives voted to refer the parliamentary investigation committee's report on the fall of Mosul to the General Prosecutor. On 27 August, the Council of Representatives unanimously adopted the Political Parties Law, which will provide greater openness in the operation of political parties.

12. During the reporting period, the ruling bodies of Iraq took further steps to reinvigorate the country's national reconciliation agenda. On 4 July, the Committee of Religious Endowments and Religious Affairs of the Council of Representatives launched its initiative for national reconciliation entitled the "Ramadan document" to complement the objectives set out in the national political agreement and the ministerial programme. The main goal of the initiative is to empower representatives from all components, State and religious institutions, community leaders and the media to promote the principles of national reconciliation. In early July, the Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation of the Office of the Prime Minister shared with the three presidencies its action plan entitled the "Baghdad document". The document is aimed at garnering commitments from all components inside and outside Iraq, including groups outside the political process, to advance an inclusive national reconciliation process. On 23 August, the Prime Minister issued an executive order for the formation of a committee and subcommittees tasked with implementing national reconciliation in the Baghdad Belt area by monitoring human rights abuses, addressing public complaints and disputes between local communities, establishing communications mechanisms with

residents to ascertain their concerns and promote community reconciliation. On 5 and 18 September, the Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation held consultations with local residents and community leaders to identify their main areas of concern. Other initiatives to advance a broad and inclusive reconciliation process were also announced by Iyad Allawi, the Office of the Presidency, the Association of Muslim Scholars and the Iraqi Communist Party.

13. At the same time, the Sunni political leadership of Iraq made efforts to promote national reconciliation initiatives at various levels. In a bid to aid community reconciliation and achieve a balanced political representation in mixed governorates, Parliamentary Speaker Salim al-Jubouri held discussions with the head of the Badr Organization, Hadi al-Ameri, on a draft law on peaceful coexistence in Diyala. On 19 August, an Anbar liberation conference was held in Baghdad under the auspices of the Speaker as part of efforts to engage Sunnis in the fight against ISIL and prepare for post-liberation in Anbar. As part of efforts to strengthen unity among Sunni leaders, including those outside the political process, in early August, the Speaker's Office submitted to Iraqi Forces Coalition Members of Parliament a road map on national reconciliation entitled "Sunni Vision for the Iraqi State". On 30 August, the Sunni Endowment Council held a conference on combating violence and extremism. Participants included political, tribal, community and intellectual leaders. They released an outcome statement, which included calls for Muslim unity and the rejection of sectarianism.

14. Most of the priority legislation that would aid national reconciliation, however, remained pending in Parliament. Votes on the national guard law were postponed on 30 August and again on 7 September owing to disagreements between parliamentary blocs over its provisions. Additionally, no progress was made towards the enactment of a general amnesty law since its first reading on 5 July. Meanwhile, the National Reconciliation Committee of the Council of Representatives separated the Justice and Accountability and Banning of the Baath Party Act into two bills on 25 July. While the Council of Representatives concluded, on 30 July, the first reading of the draft law on the banning of the Baath Party, dissolved entities and parties, and the activities of racism, terrorism and *takfir* (charge of unbelief), no voting took place on legislation that would revise de-baathification measures. On 15 September, the Council of Ministers decided to withdraw and review all draft laws submitted to the Council of Representatives by the previous Government. This amounted to some 80 draft bills, including the draft anti-terrorism law of 2005.

15. Following the expiration of the presidential term of Masoud Barzani on 19 August, the political parties of the Kurdistan region of Iraq held eight rounds of talks on the issue of the presidency between 18 August and 8 October. The Kurdistan Democratic Party of President Barzani is seeking an extension of the presidential term with the current presidential powers and an election by direct vote, while the Gorran Movement, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Kurdistan Islamic Group propose that the Regional Parliament elect the president. Inter-party talks were continuing at the time of reporting.

16. On 19 August, the Kurdistan Region Constitutional Drafting Committee formally requested the Kurdistan Regional Parliament to extend its mandate after holding consultations for 90 days and approving 74 articles of a new draft regional constitution. The Turkmen and Assyrian Christian members of the 20-member

Constitutional Committee continued to boycott the Committee, citing its rejection of their party's proposals on minorities.

17. During the reporting period, differing views between Baghdad and Erbil persisted with respect to the implementation of the agreement of 2 December 2014 on energy exports and revenue-sharing. In July, the Kurdistan Regional Government called for a new agreement that would better address the needs of both sides. Following those calls, federal Oil Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi visited President Barzani in Erbil on 26 July in an attempt to reach common ground. The political leadership in Baghdad and Erbil continued to express their commitment to political dialogue to resolve their differences.

C. Security

18. The security situation in Iraq remained highly volatile throughout the reporting period. Conflict and armed violence were largely concentrated in contested areas in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din Governorates. The Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government continued to focus their military operations on consolidating territorial gains made against ISIL and on gradually recovering areas remaining under ISIL control with the increased support of the international coalition.

19. In Anbar, the Iraqi security forces, the popular mobilization forces and affiliates, aided by international coalition air strikes, undertook military operations to dislodge ISIL from its strongholds and safe havens in the province, mainly in and around Ramadi, Fallujah, Garma and Hit. The role of local Anbari forces participating in the operation to retake Ramadi, which was captured by ISIL in mid-May, was augmented by 6,000 Sunni tribesmen, who underwent military training in July. The first contingent of 1,000 Sunni tribesmen who had completed training was deployed to the front lines in late July to join the Government's military campaign against ISIL. Meanwhile, Government forces retained control of the town of Haditha and held on to the strategically important Haditha dam. Although ISIL launched daily attacks against the Iraqi security forces in the town of al-Baghdadi, Government forces and affiliates continued to retain control of the area. In an attempt to cut off a vital financing resource for ISIL, on 16 July, the Ministry of Interior announced the closure of the Trebil border crossing between Anbar and Jordan, at which ISIL had been imposing a tax on each truck entering and exiting the province.

20. In Salah al-Din, the Iraqi security forces and popular mobilization forces retained control of the city of Tikrit and surrounding areas. Armed clashes between Government forces and affiliates and ISIL continued throughout the reporting period, particularly in Samarra, Tikrit and Baiji. From 1 July to 12 September, ISIL launched 27 suicide vehicle-borne attacks in Baiji, resulting in substantial casualties to security personnel. Armed clashes continued between Government forces and ISIL within the perimeter of the Baiji refinery, which is still under ISIL control.

21. Peshmerga forces, supported by the popular mobilization forces and international coalition air assets, continued to exert pressure on ISIL positions in Sinjar and Ninewa. On 11 September, the Peshmerga, aided by the popular mobilization forces, retook 11 villages from ISIL in the area of Daquq, south of Kirkuk, followed by 12 villages west of Kirkuk on 30 September. Recaptured areas,

including the Khabbaz oilfield, key infrastructure and road junctions remained under Peshmerga control.

22. Baghdad continued to be afflicted by acts of violence and terrorism, almost on a daily basis. The deadliest attack occurred on 13 August, when a bomb was detonated at a market in the Jameela area of eastern Baghdad, reportedly killing at least 45 civilians and wounding 72 others. During the reporting period, there was a re-emergence of the use of under-vehicle improvised explosive devices, with 52 such attacks killing 43 civilians and wounding 68 others. Unidentified bodies continued to be found on a daily basis in the city and its outlying areas. In many cases, the mode of killing suggested sectarian or political motivations. Abductions also continued to occur in and throughout the city. On 2 August, 10 Palestinians were abducted in eastern Baghdad and, on 2 September, 18 Turkish workers were abducted, reportedly by an armed group, in eastern Baghdad and released several weeks later. On 9 September, the acting Deputy Justice Minister, another senior official of the Ministry of Justice and four security guards were abducted in north-eastern Baghdad. The security guards were reportedly later released.

D. Regional and international developments

23. During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq continued to pursue its efforts to strengthen its relations with its neighbours, other countries in the region and the broader international community. High-level Iraqi Government delegations paid official visits to Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait and Turkey as part of continuing efforts to enhance cooperation in the fight against ISIL, seek support in alleviating the economic and humanitarian situation, promote the national reconciliation agenda and support the Government's reform programme. These developments took place amidst the signing, on 14 July, of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which is intended to ensure that the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran remains peaceful. The senior political leadership of Iraq welcomed the agreement and stated that its full implementation would contribute to regional and international peace and security. In early July, Iraq's new Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Rageh al-Musawi, arrived in Tehran.

24. Iraq continued its efforts to normalize relations with member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council. During a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart on 22 July, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Hamad al-Sabah, reaffirmed his Government's commitment to bolstering bilateral ties with Iraq. Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its intention to reopen its embassy in Baghdad and a consulate in Erbil. Iraq appointed its new Ambassador to Saudi Arabia on 20 September. Iraq's relations with Qatar became strained after the latter's initiative to host meetings of some Iraqi Sunni leaders in Doha on 2 and 3 September in an effort to engage them in the Baghdad-led national reconciliation process. In a statement on 6 September, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it had not been consulted by the Government of Qatar and underlined that the sovereignty of Iraq must be respected. On 11 September, Qatar announced the appointment of its new resident Ambassador to Iraq in preparation for the upcoming reopening of its embassy in Baghdad. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, described the announcement as a positive sign.

25. Following the suicide bombing on 22 July in Suruc, Turkey, claimed by ISIL, and the assassination of two police officers in Ceylanpınar, Turkey, claimed by the Kurdistan Workers Party, the Government of Turkey confirmed on 25 July that it had carried out air strikes targeting ISIL in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Kurdistan Workers Party in northern Iraq in response to the terrorist attacks. The same day, the Prime Minister of Turkey spoke to Kurdistan Regional Government President Barzani and the President of Turkey spoke to President Masum about those counter-terrorist operations. On 27 July, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey stated that his country was respecting international law and the Charter of the United Nations in conducting air strikes in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq while being very careful about avoiding civilian casualties.

26. On 1 August, Prime Minister al-Abadi called upon the Government of Turkey to respect the sovereignty of Iraq and, on 5 August, Minister for Foreign Affairs al-Jaafari underlined that his Government had not granted Turkey authorization to carry out air strikes within Iraq's territory. In a statement on 13 September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq condemned all terrorist attacks against Turkish civilians and personnel, but described any incursion into Iraqi territory as a violation of Iraq's sovereignty. The Kurdistan Regional Government called for a halt to the confrontations and urged for the continuation of the peace process.

27. The international community continued to work with Iraq on formulating a response to combat violent extremism. Minister for Foreign Affairs al-Jaafari, along with the Deputy Secretary-General and my Special Representative, participated in the International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, held in Paris on 8 September. The Conference brought together representatives from 56 countries and 11 international and regional organizations. Participants adopted the Paris Action Plan, a road map guiding the international community's response in protecting communities targeted and threatened for ethnic or religious reasons in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic by ISIL and other terrorist organizations.

28. The situation in Iraq and counter-terrorism efforts were also part of the discussions at the 144th ordinary session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the League of Arab States, held on 13 September. Meanwhile, the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL continued to discuss ways to support the Government of Iraq. On 30 July, a small group meeting of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL was held in Quebec City, Canada, and attended by Minister for Foreign Affairs al-Jaafari and my Special Representative. Coalition partners emphasized that stabilization and national reconciliation were interlinked and praised the United Nations for its stabilization efforts, including, in particular, the establishment by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization in Iraq.

29. In late September, Prime Minister al-Abadi confirmed that the Government of Iraq was sharing intelligence with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and others in the fight against ISIL and that it hoped that the various countries and coalitions would coordinate closely in their support to Iraq.

III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

30. During the reporting period, UNAMI continued to work in close partnership with the Government of Iraq to support its efforts to strengthen inclusive political dialogue and governance. My Special Representative met with a wide range of interlocutors to follow up on the implementation of the national political agreement and ministerial programme, including efforts to advance the national reconciliation agenda.

31. My Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs also paid numerous visits to the Kurdistan region to urge Kurdish interlocutors to resolve the deadlock over the Kurdistan Regional Presidency and to support dialogue with the federal Government on energy exports and revenue-sharing.

32. On 7 September, a seminar on the theme "Devolution as part of national reconciliation" was held in Baghdad. The seminar, which had been jointly organized by UNAMI and the Office of the Prime Minister, was attended by more than 120 Government officials and civil society leaders, who discussed how the devolution of powers could support national reconciliation in Iraq and shared perspectives and approaches to federalism. UNAMI, in collaboration with the Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation, organized a conference on the role of public opinion-makers in supporting political and community reconciliation, which was held on 16 September. More than 100 prominent media, academic and civil society figures participated. Recommendations included developing media strategies to promote social and cultural reconciliation and means through which opinion-makers can positively contribute to the advancement of national and societal reconciliation. An ad hoc committee was established from among the participants to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations. Additionally, on 19 August, UNAMI conducted a joint mission to Diyala with the Implementation and Follow-Up Committee on National Reconciliation of the Office of the Prime Minister to discuss national and community reconciliation objectives with local authorities, community leaders and returnees.

33. To promote support and cooperation with the Government of Iraq, my Special Representative also engaged with representatives of Iraq's neighbours and States in the region. He visited Jordan on 14 and 15 July and Turkey on 18 September. At the invitation of the Government of Qatar, he joined the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar in addressing, on 4 and 5 September, a series of meetings among Iraqi Sunni leaders to discuss means of unifying the Sunni community behind Iraq's national reconciliation process. My Special Representative delivered key messages to the participants, including urging for their support for the unity of Iraq and the national reconciliation process, respect for the Constitution and the political process, and their outright rejection of terrorism and ISIL.

34. My Special Representative also reached out to Iraq's minority communities to explore means of enhancing the protection and promotion of their rights, meeting Sheikh Sattar Jabbar al-Hillo, spiritual leader of the Sabean-Mandaean community, and Yazidi spiritual leader Baba Sheikh at Lalish Temple in Sheikhan (Dohuk Governorate). In preparation for the aforementioned International Conference on the

Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, held in Paris on 8 September, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs took part in a United Nations brainstorming session organized by the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the topic "Victims of ethnic and religious violence in the Middle East", held in Paris from 20 to 22 July.

35. UNAMI continued its efforts to promote women's rights in Iraq in support of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). With the State Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Kurdistan Region High Council of Women's Affairs, it jointly organized a two-day national conference on the theme "Empowering women to address the impact of terrorism", held in Erbil on 3 and 4 August. Key Government officials, religious leaders, civil society representatives and representatives of the international community participated. Recommendations from the conference included the need to accelerate efforts to release women and girls abducted by ISIL from captivity and provide comprehensive services for women affected by conflict.

B. Electoral assistance

36. During the reporting period, UNAMI continued its engagement with Iraq's electoral and legislative institutions. On 13 September, my Special Representative met with the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission to discuss priority areas for the continuation of electoral assistance, taking into consideration the recommendations of the 2015 electoral needs assessment mission. Following consultations, UNAMI and the Independent High Electoral Commission agreed on focus areas of electoral support, including election results management, voting processes for internally displaced persons, database and voter registry, a legal framework, the registration of political parties and gender. UNAMI is now in the process of recalibrating technical assistance capacities to fulfil the identified requirements.

37. UNAMI also continued to follow up on the progress in discussions between the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission in defining their respective roles and responsibilities. The chairpersons of the two electoral institutions separately informed my Deputy Special Representative in August that progress had been made in defining a memorandum of understanding between the two electoral management bodies.

38. On 13 June, the Kurdistan Regional Presidency issued a decree scheduling the presidential election on 20 August. During its briefing for the diplomatic community held in Erbil on 19 August, the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission reiterated its earlier statements that it needs at least 180 days from the day funds are released and the electoral law is passed to organize an election in the region. On 8 September, the Chairperson of the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission requested the support of UNAMI in establishing the Commission's data entry centre, setting up its election results management system and conducting capacity-building workshops.

39. On 26 July, the Independent High Electoral Commission announced the receipt of a new request from citizens of Basra to designate the province as a region. Following an audit of the names and signatures in support of the request against the Commission's voter registry for Basra, the Commission announced on 18 August

that the valid names and signatures reached the two per cent required threshold for the first step of the process, as provided in the Law on the Formation of Regions (Law No. 13 of 2008). A total of 57,933 Basra citizens signed the request, 46,212 of whom matched the Commission's voter list, or 2.6 per cent of Basra's 1,741,599 registered voters. Pursuant to that, the Commission prepared and submitted to the Council of Ministers an operational plan and budget for the process. To date, however, there is no budgetary allocation to fund succeeding activities.

C. Human rights developments and activities

40. Ongoing armed conflict, acts of violence and terrorism continue to take a grave toll on civilians in Iraq. From 13 July to 16 September, UNAMI recorded a minimum number of 4,785 civilian casualties (1,739 killed and 3,046 wounded), bringing the total number of civilian casualties in Iraq since the beginning of 2015 to at least 18,457 (6,123 killed and 12,334 wounded).

41. UNAMI received numerous reports alleging serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated against civilians in an apparent widespread and systematic manner, in particular by ISIL. The reports include attacks directly targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, killings, abductions, rape and other forms of sexual violence, forced recruitment of children, wanton destruction and looting of civilian property, and denial of fundamental rights and freedoms. Members of minorities, women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly remain particularly vulnerable. It is estimated that up to 1,500 women and children, mostly from the Yezidi community, remain in captivity by ISIL.

42. The deadliest direct attack against civilians took place in Diyala Governorate on 17 July as celebrations of Eid al-Fitr commenced. A vehicle laden with explosives was detonated in the market of Khan Bani Saad Subdistrict, killing at least 108 civilians (including 3 police officers) and wounding 167 others (including 7 police officers). At least 20 people, mainly civilians, were reported missing and have, to date, not been found. ISIL claimed responsibility on social media for the attack. A similar attack took place on 10 August when a suicide bomber driving a vehicle laden with explosives targeted a crowded market just outside Baquba City, killing at least 61 people and wounding at least 88 others, including 4 children. ISIL also claimed responsibility for that attack.

43. ISIL continued to abduct, kill and punish those opposed to its ideology and rule. This included religious leaders, former public sector employees, journalists, lawyers, academics and students, former election candidates, members of the Iraqi security forces and the popular mobilization forces, and persons associated with political parties that oppose it. Examples include the public execution in Ramadi in July of eight civilians accused of cooperating with the Iraqi security forces; the abduction of 53 employees of the Independent High Electoral Commission in Mosul on 24 July, 28 of whom were killed the following day; the public execution of the Imam of the Hamid Mosque in Mosul for allegedly criticizing the terrorist group; and the public execution of a journalist in Mosul in August. Also in Mosul in August, ISIL posted a list of over 2,000 names of individuals whom it claimed to have executed. ISIL also murdered four journalists and executed five persons alleged to have been associated with the Mutahidoon Alliance (including three female Mutahidoon Alliance candidates).

44. ISIL also continued to abduct civilians and destroy buildings of cultural and religious significance. In the aftermath of an improvised explosive device attack targeting ISIL members in Hawija District of Kirkuk on 18 August, ISIL abducted at least 90 civilians in Hawija between 2 and 7 September. On 22 August and 12 September respectively, ISIL also demolished two Syrian Orthodox churches in Mosul.

45. ISIL continued to impose strict travel restrictions within its areas of control, including Mosul, Hawija and Shirqat. Trade in and out of Mosul is still very limited, as ISIL requires merchants to identify a sponsor and provide property as surety when travelling in order to ensure their return. ISIL also shut down most Internet services in Mosul around mid-August. Four families (at least 20 people) died from starvation and dehydration while fleeing ISIL through the Hamrin Mountains in Salah al-Din Governorate on about 15 July. On 19 and 20 July, an undetermined number of families were reportedly abducted by ISIL in the Hamrin Mountains. ISIL also reportedly killed civilians accused of smuggling people out of areas under its control.

46. UNAMI also continued to receive reports alleging that pro-Government armed groups and militias had perpetrated human rights violations. Members of the Sunni Arab community were targeted in particular, primarily in Diyala. On 12 August, approximately 50 members of the Sunni Arab community were abducted in Baquba District, Diyala Governorate; at least 17 of the bodies were found in the Diyala River later the same day. Many of the abductions reportedly took place at or near checkpoints manned by Iraqi security forces and associated forces. On 1 September, militia members allegedly abducted at least 40 persons of Sunni Arab origin near Balad District, Salah al-Din. The fate and whereabouts of the abductees are unknown. Reports were also received of persons in Peshmerga uniform destroying homes and structures in Sunni Arab-inhabited areas in Jalawla, Diyala Governorate, on or around 16 August.

47. The country task force on monitoring and reporting, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), documented 96 incidents of violations against children during the reporting period. The United Nations has noted a decrease in the number of reported incidents owing to lack of access to the affected populations and increased displacement. Killing and maiming continued to be the most documented violation, with 331 reported cases of child casualties (135 killed and 196 wounded). Fighting between the parties to the conflict reportedly claimed the lives of 63 children, while terror attacks killed 72 children and wounded another 99, mostly in Diyala and Baghdad.

48. ISIL continues to recruit children in Ninewa, particularly in Mosul and Tal Afar, and in Anbar. ISIL posted pictures and videos on social media showing boys being trained and boys perpetrating crimes, including killing, maiming and/or torturing civilians. ISIL also reportedly killed some of its underage fighters. On 18 August, ISIL murdered 18 juveniles in Mosul for having fled the front line in Anbar. In addition, the continued recruitment and use of children by affiliates of the popular mobilization forces in conflict areas, Baghdad and Basra remain of grave concern. Children are also reportedly participating in combat operations alongside the popular mobilization forces in Anbar and Ninevah.

49. On 12 August, the Kurdistan Regional Government executed three persons convicted in April 2014 of the abduction and murder of two girls. They were the

first executions to have taken place in the Kurdistan region of Iraq since the Kurdistan Regional Government introduced an informal moratorium on the implementation of the death penalty in 2008. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed his deep disappointment at this development later in August and urged the Kurdistan Regional Government to recommit to and formalize its unofficial moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

50. Iraq continues to be proud of its culture of freedom of expression and aims to set an example for the region. However, during the reporting period, UNAMI again received an increasing number of reports of demonstrators and journalists being harassed or assaulted by unidentified persons. UNAMI also received reports of journalists being harassed by security forces or persons associated with them during public demonstrations against corruption and poor public services in Baghdad on 7, 14 and 21 August. Two media professionals were assaulted during a similar demonstration in Karbala Governorate on 14 August. On 17 July, security forces in Basra reportedly fired on demonstrators, killing one protester and wounding three others, and on 22 August, unidentified armed men attacked protesters in front of the Basra Provincial Council.

D. Camp New Iraq and Camp Hurriya

51. The relocation of the remaining Camp Hurriya residents to safe and secure locations outside of Iraq remains the only durable and sustainable solution for those residents. Funding for the United Nations on-site monitoring of camp activities is set to expire in the coming months. Without further funding, human rights monitoring will all but cease.

52. On 4 August and 14 September, my Special Representative reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to the existing memorandum of understanding between the Government of Iraq and the Organization during meetings with the Government committee in charge of Camp Hurriya. He also gave assurances that the United Nations would continue its human rights and humanitarian monitoring and reporting.

53. My Special Adviser for the Relocation of Camp Hurriya Residents Outside of Iraq, Assistant Secretary-General Jane Lute, paid an official visit to Baghdad on 14 September, during which she briefed the Government committee on progress in relocating the residents and outlined measures to help to strengthen the process. During the meeting, the Government agreed to continue to work with the United Nations to find relocation opportunities and to reconsider permitting representatives of the diplomatic community in Iraq to visit the camp. Meanwhile, the United Nations will continue to explore ways to encourage States to assist the Government of Iraq to relocate the remaining Camp Hurriya residents to safe and secure locations outside the country.

54. Notwithstanding challenges throughout the relocation process, namely, the group's intermittent boycott of the process, momentum has been established. To date, the humanitarian claims of all residents have been reviewed by the United Nations and more than 800 individuals have found solutions either through readmission or relocation to third countries. The current objective is to relocate an additional 300 residents by the end of 2015, bringing the total number of residents

who have departed Iraq to 1,100. This figure represents more than one third of the residents registered by the United Nations.

E. Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development

55. Over 8.6 million people across Iraq, or nearly 25 per cent of the country's population, remain in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. This includes 3.2 million people displaced from their homes and spread across more than 3,400 locations. These figures reflect an increase of more than 400,000 persons in need since my previous report, in addition to the 250,000 Syrian refugees already hosted in Iraq.

56. Through the generous support of many donors, the United Nations, its partners and the Government have continued to assist the most vulnerable across Iraq, with an average of 2 million people receiving food, medical, shelter, water and protection assistance every month. However, funding for the humanitarian response does not match the ever-expanding needs in Iraq. It currently covers only 52 per cent of those needs for the entire year and only 40 per cent of the funding requirements of the highly prioritized appeal for the period from July to December 2015. United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations will soon be forced to suspend or terminate hundreds of lifesaving programmes and activities owing to a lack of funds.

57. To ensure that vital food assistance continues, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been forced to reduce the value of food vouchers and the size of food rations. Approximately 300,000 displaced persons received food vouchers in August and a reduced value voucher covering September and October requirements. An additional 824,000 beneficiaries were supported through in-kind assistance. Emergency assistance provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) boosted the vegetable production for rural populations in Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk and Anbar, with particular attention to households headed by women, benefiting 4,050 households.

58. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and partners continued to monitor checkpoints to assist civilians, provided legal assistance to 76,400 internally displaced persons and assessed the needs of 127,000 persons. The psychosocial programme of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) delivered counselling sessions reaching 12,402 persons, with a majority of beneficiaries from minority groups. UNICEF supported psychosocial services for 70,000 displaced and refugee children. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) continued to support women's centres, which provided gender-based violence information and services to 29,530 women and girls. UNFPA further strengthened the capacities of 16 uniformed personnel to combat gender-based violence. UNDP provided financial assistance to six court-based legal aid help desks in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk and six legal assistance centres within refugee and internally placed person camps in Erbil and Dohuk.

59. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continued to provide shelter for 113,000 internally displaced persons in 17 camps across Iraq, built three new camps and completed the renovation of 122 collective centres and 1,250 family shelter units. In August, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme handed over to local authorities prefabricated shelter units and infrastructure facilities, housing 1,824 internally displaced persons in Bahirka

Camp, Erbil. IOM assisted 65,382 displaced individuals through the distribution of 10,725 seasonal non-food kits, 658 tents and 345 caravans. As at late September 2015, UNICEF, WFP, IOM, UNFPA and nine non-governmental organization partners had delivered combined lifesaving assistance through the rapid response mechanism to an estimated 3.6 million recently displaced and vulnerable people, including in hard-to-reach areas of Anbar, Salah-al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk.

60. UNICEF supported over 7,000 households through its emergency cash assistance programme, UNHCR distributed cash assistance to 4,600 displaced families, and IOM further provided 2,990 with transport.

61. UNICEF reached more than 78,000 children with routine measles vaccinations and supported access to growth monitoring and nutrition services for 144,000 conflict-affected children. Aiming towards polio-free status, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health marked National Polio Immunization Day from 4 to 8 October, targeting 5.9 million children under five years old. While Iraq was removed from the list of polio-infected countries in May 2015, a joint UNICEF-WHO assessment mission in August could not establish the non-existence of residual poliovirus circulation in Iraq, largely owing to the lack of effective surveillance mechanisms in high-priority areas of Baghdad and Najaf.

62. Notwithstanding substantial investment by the Government of Iraq, the damage inflicted to the health and water sanitation infrastructure rendered the system so vulnerable that a major outbreak of cholera occurred in Najaf and Baghdad Governorates in September. With the support of the United Nations, the Ministry of Health was able to contain the outbreak, which as at 7 October had nevertheless affected more than 1,200 people, who survived because of adequate treatment.

63. UNFPA supported 21 maternity units and 80 primary health-care units, leading to 3,596 assisted deliveries. IOM supported 18,041 displaced persons, 820 host community residents and 201 health-care professionals by facilitating access to primary health care; building the capacity of the national health-care system; providing supplies; and establishing mobile and static health-care clinics. With the support of WHO and health cluster partners, 2,658,691 beneficiaries received health care through medical consultations.

64. UNESCO provided secondary education to 14,500 internally displaced persons in camps and host communities and built a prefabricated school in Sulaymaniyah on 23 August with a capacity for 500 students. UNESCO and the Iraqi authorities, including Kurdish regional representatives, jointly coordinated and monitored the final examinations of displaced students in public universities. In August, UNESCO and UNICEF provided assistance to the education system, benefiting more than 25,000 displaced children and young people, and constructed prefabricated schools for 15,000 displaced children.

65. UNDP supported the efforts of the Government of Iraq to stabilize areas liberated from ISIL, particularly in and around Tikrit, through the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization. Several infrastructure projects identified by local authorities are under way in the sectors of water, electricity, health and education, targeting 85,000 beneficiaries among the 133,000 people who have returned to Tikrit. It is estimated that the previous population of Tikrit was 200,000. On 24 August, a cash-for-work project that through a UNDP partnership with local non-governmental organizations employs 200 persons daily for public infrastructure

rehabilitation was begun. The United Nations Office for Project Services continued the operation of the Information Centre, an inter-agency initiative funded by UNHCR, WFP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat. More than 850 displaced persons accessed the Information Centre to receive information and advice on accessing humanitarian services.

66. FAO assisted 4,000 Syrian refugee households in Dohuk and Erbil with food for livestock. UNFPA supported seven primary health-care facilities in refugee camps, which assisted in 1,107 births. UNICEF leveraged specific support to cover the salaries of Syrian refugee teachers and UNESCO provided secondary education for 4,500 refugees. WFP assisted some 50,000 refugees per month with in-kind and voucher support, following a comprehensive food security and vulnerability assessment conducted in July. WHO ensured uninterrupted provision of medicine and medical supplies in the camps and host communities.

67. From mid-September, UNESCO, together with the Ministry of Education, began preparations for the establishment of the Iraqi National Curriculum Centre. UNESCO also continued to provide technical assistance and capacity-building for the conservation and management of cultural heritage in Iraq. Under the capacity-building programme of the Iraq-European Union-IOM Jointly Run Advanced Assisted Migration Initiative, 1,063 officials were trained on the integration of displaced population, the reintegration of returnees, land and property dispute resolution and border management systems to combat irregular migration, and 10 assessments on labour migration and combating trafficking in persons were conducted. The IOM community policing project facilitated discussions and created training curriculums for police.

F. Security and operational issues

68. Despite continued interest, the United Nations has yet to conclude its status of mission agreement for UNAMI. The absence of such an agreement continues to hamper the effectiveness of United Nations operations. Notwithstanding the volatile security environment in Iraq, United Nations operations are ongoing. One locally recruited UNHCR staff member abducted on 26 September was released on 3 October as a result of the efforts of the Iraqi security forces. Regrettably, no progress has been made regarding the UNAMI staff member abducted on 26 April, whose whereabouts remain unknown. I strongly urge the Government of Iraq to undertake every effort to secure his release.

69. During the reporting period, UNAMI continued to support the activities of the United Nations country team on a cost-reimbursable basis and the building of new accommodation to increase the amount of living space. To address growing passenger traffic between Baghdad and other hubs, especially Erbil, the Mission added a 19-seater turbo prop aircraft to its fleet.

70. The Government of Iraq is continuously reviewing the security arrangements in Baghdad, including those relating to the area known as the Green Zone. UNAMI is monitoring the developments and maintains close contact with the relevant authorities for ensuring that the safety and security of its personnel, premises and operations will not be negatively affected by the changes implemented.

G. Implementation of the recommendations of the strategic assessment mission

71. In its resolution 2233 (2015), the Council requested that I report in further detail on my recommendations to revise and prioritize the tasks of UNAMI. The Mission has commenced a process towards implementing the priority activities in full consultation with the Government of Iraq and in response to its needs and the evolving situation in the country. I met with Prime Minister al-Abadi in New York on 30 September and discussed, inter alia, how the United Nations could support his reform agenda, including in the field of anti-corruption. We also agreed that the Government of Iraq would include the Sustainable Development Goals in its economic and environmental policies with the support of the United Nations and the United Nations country team. Similarly, we agreed that the United Nations and the Government of Iraq would cooperate on the development and implementation of the United Nations plan of action on countering violent extremism.

72. In addition, my Special Representative and his deputies engaged with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and other high officials of the State. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need continues to be a challenge, given the acute financial constraints. The United Nations humanitarian system continues its efforts to obtain the necessary support for urgent humanitarian actions.

73. My Special Representative has redoubled efforts to promote political dialogue through a series of initiatives aimed at national reconciliation. In addition, given the urgent need for greater mine action in Iraq, UNAMI has facilitated the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service. Internal assessments have also been undertaken to determine the areas in which rule of law assistance could be provided. Furthermore, in order to enhance the overall effectiveness of such activities through the collective effort of the United Nations presence in Iraq, the process of articulating an integrated strategic framework has commenced. This process is aimed at better situating the political, humanitarian, human rights and developmental objectives and activities of UNAMI and the United Nations country team, guided by a common strategic vision for Iraq anchored on an updated situational analysis, in support of the Iraqi people and their desire for peace. Also, the existing United Nations Development Assistance Framework will be revisited in line with the evolving priorities of Iraq and the United Nations system, informed by Security Council resolution 2233 (2015).

IV. Observations

74. Amidst an unstable security environment in an Iraq increasingly fraught with economic, social and other structural challenges, the Iraqi people have peacefully made their voices heard and called upon the Government to improve State performance, governance and counter-corruption. Reforms that eliminate corruption, streamline State institutions, bring much-needed expertise to the Government and improve the delivery of services to the people of Iraq constitute important steps to reinforce trust and confidence in the Government and the future perspectives of Iraq and its people, with a positive impact towards strengthening national unity and accelerating reconciliation. It is essential that the Government capitalize on this opportunity and popular goodwill to implement meaningful

reforms. I therefore welcome the endorsement by the Council of Representatives of these reforms and underscore that the path towards reforms in Iraq requires broad political cooperation and consultations. Moreover, the Government must continue to enable the Iraqi people to peacefully raise their voices to shape their future. To that end, the Government of Iraq must do its utmost to ensure that the right of citizens to freedom of expression and assembly is fully respected and protected.

75. It is vital that the Government of Iraq continue its fight against ISIL, for which it needs increased and more effective support from countries in the region and the broader international community, above all the international anti-ISIL coalition.

76. At the same time, the Government, political forces and civil society of Iraq should not lose sight of the need to proceed with national reconciliation towards an historic settlement. The Government's reforms must therefore be accompanied by continued efforts to promote an inclusive Iraqi political system and to counter radical ideology. I urge the political leadership of Iraq and community and religious leaders to work closely to align their efforts in that regard. I also urge political blocs to reach agreement as soon as possible on legislation that will support the national reconciliation process and Iraq's political leadership to sustain its efforts to strengthen support for the fight against terrorism.

77. It is vital that the political leadership of Iraq remain unified to address the many challenges facing the country. I therefore urge political blocs in the Kurdistan region of Iraq to reach, without further delay, a compromise on the presidency of the Kurdistan Regional Government. I further reiterate my call upon Baghdad and Erbil to remain committed to negotiations in an effort to reach soon a mutual understanding on their joint agreement on energy exports and revenue-sharing, as well as a comprehensive, fair and constitutional solution to all other outstanding issues.

78. I condemn in the strongest possible terms the ongoing killing, kidnapping, rape and torture of Iraqis by ISIL, as well as its recruitment and use of children and systematic destruction of irreplaceable cultural heritage. I remain appalled by the ongoing targeting, by ISIL, of minority communities and those opposed to its ideology, including the murder of election candidates and journalists. I urge the Government of Iraq to do its utmost to bring those responsible to justice. I also remind all parties engaged in the fight against ISIL that military operations must be conducted with the utmost care to avoid civilian casualties and the violation of the rights of civilians, in full respect for international law, including fundamental human rights and humanitarian law. I further underscore the need for all relevant parties in the region, while implementing counter-terrorism, peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities, to take into account the protection of women and girls at risk of sexual violence.

79. Conflict in Iraq continues unabated, causing mass internal displacement. Iraq now has the third highest population of internally displaced persons in the world, with 3.2 million people having been displaced since January 2014. The recent arrival in Europe of tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees from across the region confirms the dire humanitarian conditions that millions of Iraqis now face. Hundreds of thousands could follow unless more is done to alleviate the suffering of the more than 8 million Iraqis who need our help, including internally displaced persons. Mindful of the forthcoming winter, a rapid investment to improve conditions in the camps and in the communities generously hosting displaced families regardless of their ethnicity and faith would provide an effective alternative

to what otherwise could result in a continuous outflow of Iraqis. With the conflict intensifying, an additional 1.4 million people may need lifesaving assistance before the end of 2015. However, humanitarian activities in Iraq continue to be severely underfunded. Of the $498 million requested under the United Nations humanitarian response plan for Iraq launched in June for the second half of 2015, only 34 per cent has been funded to date. I therefore appeal to the regional and international partners of Iraq to urgently contribute to the United Nations humanitarian response plan.

80. The stabilization and rehabilitation of liberated areas must remain a priority for the Government of Iraq, particularly in the light of the alarming rate of Iraqis fleeing war, persecution and poverty to seek refuge abroad. It is paramount that the Government continue to implement measures to ensure the return of the displaced to their places of origin by restoring and enforcing law and order in those areas and rebuilding basic infrastructure. The United Nations remains committed to continuing to assist through its good offices and the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization.

81. Lastly, I should like to extend my thanks to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, and the staff of the United Nations in Iraq for their tireless efforts in supporting the Government of Iraq. They continue their dedicated support and assistance to the Government of Iraq and to all the Iraqi people. I trust that international partners, including Iraq's neighbours, will continue to support my Special Representative in the implementation of his mandate.